

J. David Donahue and Prison Fellowship Founder Colson Discuss the PLUS in Prison Life

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Commissioner J. David Donahue and Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship

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J. David Donahue, Commissioner

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Indianapolis, (September 29, 2005) - Commissioner J. David Donahue sees an opportunity for inmates to improve their lives in prison.

He recently addressed a crowd of over 200 at the Prison Fellowship Banquet in Indianapolis. Attendees included community pastors, legislators, chaplains and volunteers. The featured speaker was Charles Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

Commissioner Donahue address the audience about innovative ways to extend hope to those who are incarcerated in prisons and give them opportunity to better themselves before returning to their local communities.

For the Indiana Department of Correction, the program called PLUS, or Purposeful Living Units Serve, is intended to give inmates a focus that will guide them to a successful life.

“We have to be change agents for inmates and provide a positive and safe environment for spiritual growth and development. By doing so, we can significantly impact the recidivism rates amongst inmates in our communities,” said Commissioner Donahue.

"Indiana is fortunate to have David Donahue heading up their correctional system. He is a strong advocate of public safety and understands the need to prepare prisoners to re-enter society. He understands the positive role faith communities can play in achieving these ends,” said Mark Earley, President of Prison Fellowship and former Attorney General of Virginia.

This past summer, three facilities with in the Indiana Department of Correction- one housing men, one housing women and the other juveniles - unveiled the PLUS program. The program at all 3 facilities has shown a great reduction in misconduct reports among inmates participating.

The programs' curriculum include texts on faith and character: “Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom” by Author: Robin Casarjian; “The Purpose-Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?” by Rick Warren; and “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen R. Covey.

As noted, the PLUS program required no additional state money, but seeks donations, such as, "The Purpose-Driven Life" books and other materials that are part of the initiative. Volunteers have been providing mentoring at all three facilities. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, for the faith and character-building program, please visit <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection/initiatives.htm>.

"We are providing an opportunity for folks to engage in their own faith and develop character," Donahue said. "We are also cognizant that inmates of no faith need to build on their character."

The Department has plans underway of introducing the program to four additional facilities in November.

About The Department of Correction

The Department employs over 8,000 employees and houses 24,000 adult and juveniles in 32 facilities, ranging from minimum to maximum custody, prison camps, juvenile facilities and work release centers. The Department's home page on the Internet can be found at: <http://www.in.gov/indcorrection>. The Department's Re-entry Site can be found: <http://www.reentry.in.gov>.